



Public rights of way: Town's hidden treasures

Town has dozens of nearly forgotten rights of way; map inside shows them all

By Ted Hayes

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When her children were young, Sally Small would often take them on summer afternoon trips to Hundred Acre Cove, just a short walk from the Paquin Road home she raised them in. Getting to the water was never a problem, she said; there were plenty of public access points, or Rights of Way, to the water's edge. Some were narrow paths skirting neighbors' lots, others dead end streets that ended with beautiful views of the cove.

"There was plenty of access," said Ms. Small. "That was really one of the things that made Barrington so appealing."

Time has changed much of that.

Barrington, a town surrounded by water on three sides, has more waterfront land than any other town in the East Bay, yet ask most residents how many public access points to the water there are, and you might hear of four or five. In truth, there are at least 40 town- and state-recognized rights of way, and perhaps many more that have been forgotten

about. Not all are public, but many are.

Since the fall of 2001, the Barrington Harbor Commission has been researching the number and condition of rights of way in Barrington, hoping to revise its lengthy Harbor Management Plan, a document that spells out how Barrington's precious waterways are to be used.

Commission members are finding that on the whole, many of Barrington's rights of way are vastly under-utilized. Many are unmarked, and others have been improperly blocked off by signs or illegal dumping. Besides listing all the access points, members hope to develop a strategy and policy to improve many of the sites that have fallen into disuse.

"I think it's important that these sites get recognized and get utilized," said commission chairman James McClelland.

"I think, in the back of my head, that if people knew more about these, they might be used more."

Truth be told, there are some gems hidden among the quiet neighborhood streets lining Narragansett Bay, the Barrington and Palmer rivers and Hundred Acre Cove.

Many of them lie on the cove,

where Ms. Small raised her children. Others are tucked on quiet side streets in West Barrington, and yield access to hidden sites — large estuaries, deserted sandy beaches and tiny nooks with expansive views. Some are restricted to neighborhood use only, and others are open to the general public. Some provide parking, and some don't.

Where did they come from?

Many of them date back decades or more, written into deeds when the town's lands were parceled up from farmland and sold into buildable lots. Recognized in town records or by the State of Rhode Island, they were designed to last in perpetuity to preserve waterfront access.

Not all provide clear paths to the water, and not all are easy to find. In fact, of nearly 30 rights of way visit-



ed by a Barrington Times reporter, just one had been marked as a public right of way — a path at the end of Clarke Road leading down to Barrington Beach.

This, said Ms. Small, is a problem. Several months ago, she appeared before the Town Council and told members that something needs to be done to identify the dozens in town.

“Now, a lot of them have chains across them or they aren’t very clear

(as to where they are),” she said. “But Barrington’s waterfront is a very precious asset. I think it’s important that children and families who move to Barrington have the right to use the water. It’s part of their growing up.”

In addition to noting the rights of way now in place, Ms. Small has been researching old forgotten rights-of-way in an effort to re-establish them as public paths. More than a few, she

said, have been forgotten as lands change hands and waterfront development increases.

She has been working with the harbor commission to update its list, so that when the new management plan is complete — hopefully by the end of the year, said Mr. McClelland — it will be more comprehensive.

Already, the work has paid off. Mr. McClelland said that since the commission started revising its manage-

ment plan, he’s received several calls and letters from people who know or think they know about old forgotten rights of way. Each is being researched, and could be added to the revised plan.

“I’ve received stuff in the mail, and there are others we’re taking a look into,” he said. “We want a comprehensive list.”

Rights of Way: Where to find them (map on next page)

Following is a list of 40 town- and state-recognized rights of way in Barrington. In many cases, there are no signs depicting the areas as rights of way, and limited or no parking. Designations are as follows:

- 1: Acre Avenue: This right of way, recognized by the CRC (see bottom of story for key), is accessed by a long path at the end of Acre Avenue. It leads to Hundred Acre Cove.
- 2: Adams Point: There are two town-recognized rights of way here, both of which are semi-private, reserved for the use of abutting land owners only.
- 3: Allen Avenue: A CRC right of way located at the end of Allen next to Cove Haven Marina.
- 4: Annawamscutt Road: This CRC-recognized right of way lies at the end of the road.
- 5: Appian Way: One of the prettiest rights of way in town can be found by following Appian Way to its southern terminus. At the end of the road, a path leads to a large, several hundred-yard long secluded beach.
- 6: Barrington Town Beach: Perhaps the best-known public right of way in town.
- 7: Bay Spring Avenue: Follow the road until it ends at a small sandy beach overlooking Bullock’s Cove and East Providence. This is a CRC right of way.
- 8: Belvidere Avenue: This spot has no water access, but it has been desig-

nated a town right of way for pedestrian use.

- 9: Bourne Lane: A CRC right of way, a grass path at the end of the road leads to the Warren River opposite Blount Seafood.
- 10: Bluff Road: This is a CRC-designated right of way.
- 11: Central Avenue: Another CRC right of way, there are four parking spaces at the site.
- 12: Clarke Avenue: At the end of the road, this CRC right of way consists of a path to the beach.
- 13: County Road: The old police station property is a town right of way. There is a boat ramp and a small beach.
- 14: East Bay Bike Path: The entire path is a right of way.
- 15: Elm Lane: A CRC right of way is located at the south end of Elm Lane.
- 16: Haines Park: A 73-acre park in northern Barrington.
- 17: Juniper Street: This CRC-designated spot ends at a marsh, with a path to the water’s edge.
- 18: Latham Park: CRC and town-designated.
- 19: Lavin’s Marina: CRC and town-designated.
- 20: Mathewson Road: At the corner of Ferry Road, this town right of way provides access to Warren River.
- 21: Nayatt Road: From Washington Road, take a right on Nayatt and follow it around as it makes a right

turn. Follow to Mussachuck Creek. From there, a path leads to a beach area with views of Narragansett Bay. This is a CRMC right of way. There is no public parking at this time, and police will ticket.

- 22: Nockum Hill: CRC and town-designated, it is accessed by a dirt path from George Street, behind the horse stables.
- 23: Ocean Avenue: This CRC right offers sweeping views.
- 24: Opechee Drive: A town right of way with little access.
- 25: Osamequin Nature Trail: This large preserve, designated by the state and town, offers hiking trails and views of Hundred Acre Cove.
- 26: Oyster Shell Lane: A **PRIVATE** right of way with views of the Warren River.
- 27: Riverview Drive: This street ends at a tidal marsh, with a path leading to the water.
- 28: Rumstick Point: A CRC area accessible only by boat.
- 29-30: Rumstick Road: Two rights of way designated non-public ROWs for the use of abutting land owners only.
- 31: Teed Avenue: At the end of Hanson Road, this CRMC right of way is not public, reserved for the use of abutting land owners only.
- 32: Teed Avenue: At the end of Mason Road, a small path leads to the water’s edge. A town right.

- 33: Shore Road: This CRMC right of way runs parallel to Shore Road.
- 34: Virginia Road: This CRC right of way abuts a wetland.
- 35: Walker’s Farm: The whole of Walker’s Farm is designated public.
- 36: Wamsutta Avenue: At the end of the road, a small path leads to the water, just south of the White Church Bridge.
- 37: Watson Avenue: This is a CRC-designated area.
- 38: Willow Way: At the end of Willow Way, this CRC-designated right offers views of Allin’s Cove.
- 39: Woodbine Avenue: A CRC-designated right of way.
- 40: Barron Saltmarsh: Located at the end of Wallis Avenue, this small right of way has been designated by the CRC and offers views of the Palmer River.

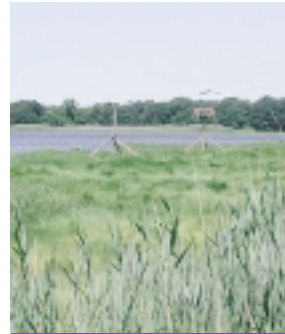
**CRMC-designated: Recognized by the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council.*

**CRC-Designated: Recognized by the Coastal Resources Center, run out of the University of Rhode Island.*

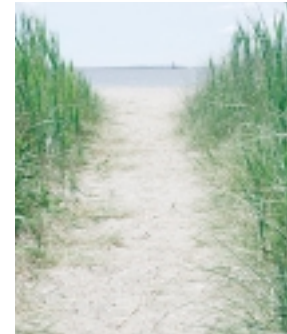
**Town-designated: Recognized by the Town of Barrington.*

Source: Town of Barrington, Harbor Management Plan.

Rights of Way: Where to find them



1. Acre Avenue



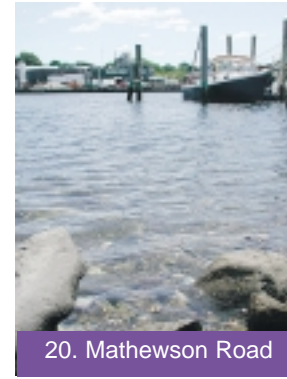
5. Appian Way



25. Osamequin



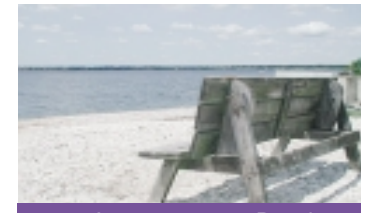
10. Bluff Road



20. Mathewson Road



7. Bay Spring Ave.



4. Annawamscutt Road



9. Bourne Lane



36. Wamsutta Ave.



32. Teed Ave.



13. County Road



21. Nayatt Road